

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TANANA 00128 260242Z

64

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-10 AID-05 OPR-01 A-01 FBO-02

SCCT-01 SY-04 ( ISO ) W  
----- 050636

R 231600Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6861

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0128

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, MA

SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR'S INTERNAL POLITICS CONTINUE TO PERCOLATE

PRETORIA FOR RSO

REFS: A. TANANARIVE 0099; B. TANANARIVE 0114 (BOTH  
REPEATED INFO PARIS AND PRETORIA)

BEGIN SUMMARY: MALAGASY POLITICAL SCENE CONTINUES TO  
BUBBLE WITH ALERT STATUS REPORTED FOR BOTH GENDARMERIE AND  
ARMY. AUGMENTED GENDARMERIE PRESENCE DIRECTLY OBSERVED BY  
EMBASSY OFFICERS. CURRENT VIEWS OF SOME WESTERN OBSERVERS  
SUMMARIZED BELOW. EMBASSY HAS TAKEN PRELIMINARY SECURITY  
MEASURES FOR EMBASSY STAFF AND LOCAL AMERICAN COMMUNITY BUT  
TANANARIVE GENERALLY QUIET. END SUMMARY.

1. AIR OF ANTICIPATION HANGS OVER TANANARIVE AMONG  
FOREIGN OBSERVERS AND POLITICALLY AWARE MALAGASY AS THEY  
AWAIT SOME CHANGE IN GOMR. GENDARMERIE APPARENTLY ON  
ALERT NIGHTS OF JANUARY 21 AND 22 WITH AUGMENTED COVERAGE  
OF KEY INSTALLATIONS SUCH AS RADIO-TV STATION AND ESSO  
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PAGE 02 TANANA 00128 260242Z

STORAGESDEPOT. ARMY, HOWEVER, NOT RPT NOT IN EVIDENCE,

ALTHOUGH OFFICERS REPORTEDLY CONFINED TO THEIR CANTONMENTS OVERNIGHT. POLICE PROTECTION OF EMBASSY AND AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE HAS DISAPPEARED, EVIDENTLY BECAUSE OF DIVERSION TO ALERTS FOR POLITICAL EVENTS. LOCAL PRESS HAS REPORTED ALERTS ROUTINELY BUT THEIR POLITICAL SPECULATION SUBDUED SINCE ARTICLE REPORTED REFTEL B.

2. CONVERSATIONS OF DEFENSE ATTACHE AND DCM WITH FRENCH MILITARY COUNSELOR, COLONEL ROGER MONTHIOUX, AND FRENCH ADVISOR TO GENDARMERIE, LT. COL. PAUL HAEGELI, ON JAN 22, PROVIDED SOME INTERESTING VIEWS ON SITUATION. OCCASION WAS STAG LUNCH WHICH INCLUDED ONLY U.S. AND WEST EUROPEAN DIPLOMATS WHERE VIEWS WERE FRANKLY EXCHANGED. SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS SET OUT BELOW AND GENERALLY REFLECT CONSENSUS THOSE PRESENT.

3. TOP MAN. GENERAL RAMANANTSOA IS INDISPENSABLE ELEMENT IN HOLDING GOVERNMENT TOGETHER. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COLONELS TOO DEEP TO PERMIT ANY ONE OF THEM TO ASSUME POWER FOR LONG. ONLY POSSIBLE REPLACEMENT FOR GENERAL RAMANANTSOA IS GENERAL ANDRIAMAHAZO WHO IS CAPABLE AND RESPECT BUT DOESN'T WANT JOB. MONTHIOUX STRESSED THAT GEN ANDRIAMAHAZO IS ALSO COMMANDANT OF TANANARIVE MILITARY DISTRICT WHICH MIGHT SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT OUTCOME OF ANY COUP ATTEMPT.

4. COLONEL RATSIMANDRAVA, MIN INTERIOR. LT. COL. HAEGELI, WHO HAS KNOWN RATSIZANDRAVA FOR SIX YEARS, DESCRIBED HIM AS DEDICATED NATIONALIST, PURITANICAL, AND ECONOMICALLY NAIVE. HE SAID RATSIMANDRAVA GENUINELY WANTED TO IMPROVE LOT OF AVERAGE MALAGASY AND DESTJOY GRIP OF MALAGASY BOURGEOIS ON ECONOMY THROUGH FOKONOLONA PROGRAM. RATSIMANDRAVA ALSO BEHIND DRIVE AGAINST FOREIGN COMPANIES WHOM HE SEES AS ALLIES OF MALAGASY BOURGEOIS AND CONTRARY TO ABSOLUTE MALAGASY INDEPENDENCE. WHEN HAEGELI SUGGESTED NO COUNTRY TODAY COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS, EVEN MAJOR POWERS, RATSIMANDRAVA DID NOT APPEAR TO UNDERSTAND HAGELI'S POINT. WHEN HAEGELI ASKED RATSIMANDRAVA IF HE WAS A COMMUNIST, RATSIMANDRAVA REPORTEDLY REPLIED THAT HE HAD NEVER BEEN ABLT TO READ MARX

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TANANA 00128 260242Z

OR LENIN, FINDING THEM DULL, BUT THAT HE WAS FOR COMMON MAN AND IF THAT MEANT HE WAS A COMMUNIST THEN HE WAS A COMMUNIST.

5. COLONEL RABETAFIKA, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF GOVERNMENT. FRENCH OFFICERS AND OTHERS AGREED RABETAFIKA WAS INDEED RIGHT-HAND MAN OF GENERAL RAMANANTSOA WITH EXCELLENT POWER BASE IN ARMY. FACT THAT RABETAFIKA BEHIND-SCENES OPERATOR

AND NOT KNOWN TO PUBLIC MONTHIOUX DISMISSED WITH WHAT HE SAID WAS RABETAFIKA'S OWN COMMENT. WHEN GENERAL RAMANANTSOA SUPPOSEDLY SUGGESTED TO RABETAFIKA THAT IF HE WAS GOING TO BECOME POLITICAL HE NEEDED TO BE SEEN IN PUBLIC AND MAKE SPEECHES, RABETAFIKA SUPPOSEDLY REPLIED, "WHAT, LIKE YOU?" (REFERENCE TO FACT THAT GENERAL RAMANANTSOA ALSO DID NOT MAKE PUBLIC POLITICAL APPEARANCES BEFORE HE CAME TO POWER.)

6. ARMY VERUS GENDARMERIE. IT WAS GENERALLY AGREED THAT IN MILITARY CONFRONTATION BY FORCE THE TWO WERE EVENLY MATCHED FOR FOLLOWING REASONS: (A) GENDARMERIE, ALTHOUGH LARGER THAN ARMY, IS WIDELY SCATTERED THROUGHOUT ISLAND; (B) TANANARIVE ONLY LIKELY SITE OF DECISIVE MILITARY ACTION; (C) BOTH DIVIDED BY COTIER-MERINA RIVALRIES; (D) BOTH DIVIDED BY CLEAVAGE BETWEEN YOUNGER POST-INDEPENDENCE OFFICERS AND OLDER OFFICERS MORE CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH FRENCH; (E) GENDARMERIE FURTHER DIVIDED BETWEEN LOWER CLASS MERINA COMMANDER (RATSIMANDRAVA) AND ITS MANY BOURGEOIS MERINA OFFICERS.

7. CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT. CONSENSUS WAS THAT MINIMUM CHANGE WOULD BE CABINET RESHUFFLE ALTHOUGH PALACE COUP NOT ENTIRELY DISCOUNTED. FRENCH MILITARY CONSELOR SUGGESTED THAT GOMR WOULD EXPAND CABINET TO INCLUDE FORMER VICE PRESIDENT RESAMPA AS SOP TO PSD AND COTIERS. COUNSELOR INDICATED THAT HE HAD HEARD THAT FONMIN RATSIRAKA HAD RECENTLY MET SECRETLY WITH RESAMPA AND PAID COURTESY CALL ON PRESIDENT TSIRANANA. (NO ONE ELSE BOUGHT THIS THESIS.)

8. BOTH IN THIS AND OTHER CONVERSATIONS EMBASSY HAS FOUND GENERAL AGREEMENT WITH ITS VIEW THAT MINECON AND FIN RAMAROSON IS MOST VULNERABLE MINISTER, BOTH BECAUSE ECONOMY IS IN BAD SHAPE AND BECAUSE HE IS ONLY MERINA

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 TANANA 00128 260242Z

CIVILIAN MINISTER. COTIER CIVILIAN MINISTERS MUCH LESS LIKELY SBE CHANGED BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTY OF FINDING REPLACEMENTS AMONG COTIER INTELLECTUALS NOT IDENTIFIED WITH PREVIOUS REGIME. RAMANANTSOA WOULD BE LOATH CHANGE MERINA-COTIER BALANCE AMONG MINISTERS BECAUSE OF RISK OF REVIVING COTIER VIOLENCE OF LATE 1972 AND EARLY 1973

9. GOVERNOR CENTRAL BANK LEON RAJAABELINA PROBABLY LEADING CANDIDATE REPLACE RAMAROSON. UNFORTUNATELY HE HAS BECOME ONE OF MAIN APOSTLES OF GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN ECONOMY. WHILE IN MANY WAYS FRIENDLY TOWARD U.S. AS RESULT HIS SIX YEARS WITH IMF IN WASHINGTON, HE AT TIMES SEEMS DETERMINED DEMONSTRATE STRONG NATIONALISM TO ATONE FOR BOTH HIS AMERICAN PERSONAL WAYS AND FACT HIS WIFE IS FRENCH.

10. RICE PROBLEM. LURKING IN BACKGROUND OF POLITICAL FERMENT IS INCREASING GRUMBLING BY TANANARIVE POPULACE BECAUSE OF INADEQUATE SUPPLIES AND LONG QUEUES FOR RICE (THE BASIC STAPLE) OVER PAST TEN DAYS. THIS COULD BE PLAYED UPON BY "MAN ON WHITE HORSE" AFTER TAKING POWER IN EFFORT OBTAIN POPULAR SUPPORT.

11. EMBASSY HAS TAKEN PRELIMINARY PRECAUTIONS REGARDING AMERICANS: EMBASSY OFFICERS AND MARINES ALERTED, AND AMERICAN COMMUNITY CAUTIONED ABOUT INNECESSARY MOVEMENTS AT NIGHT. LIKELIHOOD OF ACTION DIRECTED AGAINST EMBASSY OR AMERICANS SEEMS SMALL.  
MENDENHALL

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## Message Attributes

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